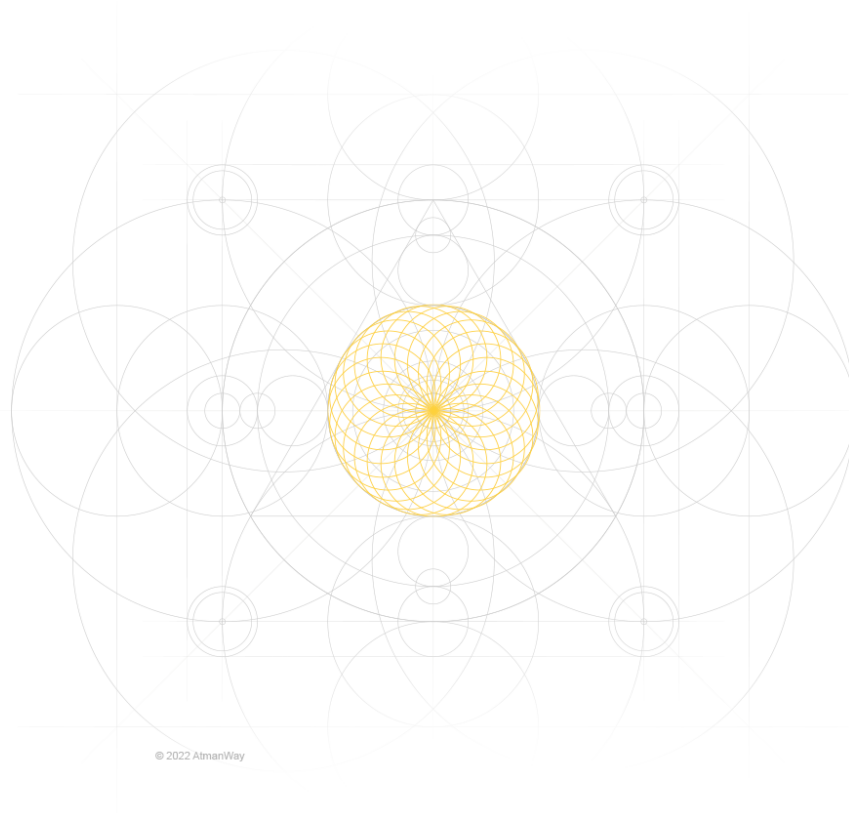


ALCHEMY & LIGHT

Alchemy and Light
Illuminating the Path of Human Transformation

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Abstract

This paper explores Alchemy as intimately interconnected and part of the same mystic teachings with Kabbalah, Yoga (and Sufism), and inter-linked by the archetype of Light, at their foundation and at the core of their message.

Alchemy in essence is a transformational practice to illuminate human consciousness and elevate Wisdom in the world.

To corroborate this statement I have focused on the origins, meaning and significance of Alchemy and Light throughout cosmology, religions and wisdom traditions, as well as on the embodiment, integration and implications of light in the acceleration of consciousness and human evolution, and touching also in the end upon leadership and societal change.

Alchemy is a powerful system to interact with, make meaning of, and explain the world. Along the process of writing, I found many synchronicities that invited me to pay attention and respond to (inner and outer) opportunities to integrate Alchemy within my life and work, and serve related endeavors. Some of those are helping to clarify and come to terms with my own sense of cosmology – and my personal meaning of words such as Spirit and Soul.

Being with, embracing and writing about Alchemy and Light has been a journey into the Sacred. Looking back I now see many instances of encountering Alchemy in my whole life, and still more to unfold along my path – all share a sparkle of wisdom and joy in my heart.

An ongoing and unfolding journey, this paper is a work in progress. This work is an initial step and beginning of a journey rather than the end of it, as the destination keeps moving and extending. I am deeply grateful for being on this journey, regardless of the destination.

Areas to further develop, articulate and expand include: Light in Quantum Physics, Cosmology, Geometry, far-Eastern religions (Sufism, Buddhism, Tao and Zen) and ancient gnostic and mythological traditions (e.g., Essenes and Atlantis), and in the realms of Conscious Leadership and Systemic Change, in Business and Society, at large.

Keywords: Alchemy, Kabbalah, Light, Embodiment, Transformation, Soul, Spirit.

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*“I am the light that is over all things.
I am all: from me all came forth, and to me all attained.
Split a piece of wood; I am there.
Lift up the stone, and you will find me there.”*

The Gospel of Thomas
(Logion 77)

Encounter with Alchemy: the step to upgrade Consciousness

My first conscious (or subconscious) encounter with Alchemy is associated with a dream; a symbolic dream, I had at the beginning of the Covid pandemic, brought to my awareness a profound fascination for alchemy and has grabbed my attention and since then.

In the dream, Alchemy is what is required to access the next level, “The Gold Within Humanity”.

The Gold Within Humanity – A Dream on Alchemy ¹

The dream unfolds into two parts (act 1 and act 2) and is complemented with a reflection, an insight that dawned on me during my morning meditation, upon reflecting on the dream.

Dream 1st Act – In the first part of the dream, I come out of a train station terminus, by an Iberic village in Spain or Portugal, with other friends – with me I recall the vivid presence of my wife Cris, my dog Plato, and an architect friend of mine.

I am surprised by the sudden pollution of cars. I start walking my way along the external wall surrounding the citadel. There’s a portal in the city wall that opens into a wide natural park, slightly steep meadow going up, framed into a rock wall of an 18th century three-store building facade with fake, closed windows and doors. There’s a crack in the building facade, with 90°-degree steep rocks, shaping steps of a vertical pathway. I climb up alone first - halfway, I pause, look down. I am concerned about my dog. Will he be able to follow? Last part of the ascent is the hardest, slippery, hard to cling on the rocks to prepare a transition *from vertical to horizontal*, as I need to crawl flat on my belly and cling my nails into the rock, to reach the plateau. When I am up, on a rocky dry landscape, I see in the distance shadows of other beings, for their shape they could belong to another civilization. While I enjoy the panoramic view, and the moon-like landscape, I ask myself:

“What skills are needed to access this level of civilization?”

– and the answer comes to the speed of light : “ALCHEMY”. Alchemy is the answer.

The dream moves on to a second scene.

Dream 2nd Act – In the second part of the dream, I find myself in the monthly community call of the Chartres Academy. Knowing the dream’s message is too big not to be shared, I

¹From my dream journal on April 19, 2020 – A dream I had in Italy during the COVID pandemic.

feel I must share the dream I just had. The very moment, I am about to ask permission to speak, I am saluted by Dr. Anne Baring, waving her hand and a voice starts to speak; surprised I look at the screen through all the zoom thumbnails of people in the gallery view, and I realize the sound comes from my image icon. It is a voice inside me speaking out and sharing the dream's message for humanity. The dream ends.

Dream Meditation's Insight – Upon awakening, in my morning meditation, holding space for the meaning of the dream and “Alchemy” to unfold and explain itself, a clear message arises to my awareness: “Alchemy is about transmuting fear into love, transforming (metal used for) war weapons into gold resources to cultivate a new world waiting to flourish”.

My oniric life has always been rich and revealing, however this dream had a different taste. The extent and power of its message has invited me to pay close attention to the subject of Alchemy, and the state of the world, and stay close in contact with ensuing dreams and visions. Since then, I have been dialoguing with the world of Alchemy and reflecting on its gifts. And further quite a few related dreams, visions and experiences have followed which I kept collecting and weaving with my life and integrating in my work in the world².

It is as if Alchemy were a light code, a key through which light, clarity, and new understanding could come forth, allowing me to decode, as offering an alphabet to read the matrix of reality around me. Something had opened up in me, welcoming a larger seed to flourish and providing a new lens to see. I realized something had broken-open, and through the cracks light was coming forward as insights, flashes of light. Many of these started to surface as internal imagery in dreams³, and meditation, or as external suggestions in nature and geometry signs, each with a glimpse of light with the potential to touch and expand my awareness. Geometry particularly got my attention in my work as a code, and coded information.

I realize, as I now share this dream in writing, a joy comes up deep from within, from telling out an ancient story wanting to emerge and be seen.

² Both the Soul Leadership Journey and the Wisdom Dialogue movement initiatives launched with my company, AtmanWay are examples of ways through which Alchemy has continued speaking to me and moved me into action; and both share the mission of illuminating and elevating wisdom for world consciousness to evolve.

³ Since reading Jung's Red Book my curiosity rose about the meaning of powerful and symbolic dreams I often have and how they relate to my journey and where we are as humanity in the world. Some of these dreams, particularly related to the subject of Alchemy may be further included in the Appendix.

History

History of Alchemy

The story of Alchemy is intertwined with the story of Kabbalah⁴, and spreads across human history throughout, and beyond the Mediterranean, the epicenter shifting from Egypt, and Greece, to Andalusia Spain, Provence⁵, and Italy, and inspiring major wisdom traditions. With deep roots in Babylonian and Greek, as well as Chinese, Indian and Persian civilizations, Alchemy has mutually⁶ touched and influenced various religions (Christian Gnosticism and Judaism, Islam and Persian Sufism⁷) and eastern wisdom traditions (including Yoga). The first mention of the noun “Alchemy” appears in Zosimos, a Graeco-Egyptian alchemist and gnostic mystic in Alexandria in 300 CE, while traces go further back in time also to the Vedic India (1,500-500 BCE), and in the Archaic China (6,000-2,100 BCE).⁸

Alchemy etymology

The word Alchemy derives from the Arabic al-kīmiyā. Composed of two Arabic roots: *Al* (Arabic definite article 'the') and kēme (Coptic word derived ancient Egyptian *kmt*) meaning both

⁴Alchemy originated in Egypt during the Bronze age, with later significant influence over Greek and Latin philosophers - such as Pythagoras (c. 570–c. 495 BCE), whose Pythagorean school had close connection to Hermetica, and implicitly to Alchemy, and Aristotle (384-322 BCE), with his book *Secretum Secretorum* (“The Secret of Secrets”), that has a chapter on Alchemy (with an early version of The Emerald Tablet), Virgil (70-19 BCE) who codified the process of making philosophical gold in stories such as the golden bough (Aeneid 6. 136-148), or Ovid (43 BCE – 17/18 CE), whose masterpiece *Metamorphoses* is seen as a codified poetic form of alchemical truths about philosophical gold. After the Muslim conquest of Egypt (7th century), Arabs absorbed alchemists' knowledge. The Islamic civilization became the custodian of alchemy (8th century) and ancient sciences then brought to Spain, through Persian and Arab philosophers such as Jabir ibn Hayyan (8th-9th century), Avicenna (980-1037), and Ibn Arabi (1165-1240). After alternate successes and adventures, Alchemy’s torch passed on to Latin Europe, and relaunched with the Renaissance (17th century), with the translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, by Marsilio Ficino (1433-99), by his pupil, Pico della Mirandola (1463-94), with its integration with Kabbalah teachings, and with the work of Paracelsus (1493-1541), the Quintessential Renaissance figure, and initiator of the science of pharmacology, who saw Alchemy as instrumental to the conception of human life, as inseparable from the life of the cosmos. In the 20th Century, Alchemy gained popularity with the work of Jung, who also connected it to Kabbalah. (See Freedman (2019) and Skinner et al (2019)).

⁵According to biographies from S. Bernardo di Chiaravalle, several study centers in Troyes, close to Chiaravalle’s Cistercians monastery, focused on Kabbalah and between XII and XIII centuries Kabbalistic schools spread across southern France, particularly towards the west across Provence and Languedoc. (Ghighini, E. (2007), *La Rosa Mistica*, p. 107).

⁶Alchemy, like Kabbalah, was a visionary and contemplative tradition handed down from teacher to pupil and, indeed, many alchemists were kabbalists and vice-versa (in Baring, A. (2023). *The Great Work of Alchemy: Healing the Traumatized Soul - Embassy of the Free Mind* 26/10/23 - Webinar with Anne Baring)

⁷Corbin H. (1971). *L’Homme de Lumière dans le Soufisme*. (Italian version), p. 19.

⁸“ In Vedic India, Alchemy was known by the term *Nagayuna*, or Path of the Serpent. In China, the oldest Alchemical text, *Nei-Ching* (The Yellow Emperor’s Book of Internal Medicine) is dated somewhere between 4,000 and 5,000 BCE, predating both the I-Ching and the Tao Te Ching” (in Goddard, D. (1999) *The Tower of Alchemy: An Advanced Guide to the Great Work*, (p. 1)).

the country and the color black (as Egypt was referred to as the “Black Land” fertile and auriferous soil of the Nile valley, by contrast with the “Red Land”, the surrounding desert), it refers to the Egyptian matter, and the craft to fuse or cast a metal.

Together in association the word al-kīmiyā, has been interpreted as “the process of transmutation by which to fuse or reunite with the divine or original form”⁹.

Hermes Trismegistus

Alchemy origins go back in history to the mythical figure of Hermes Trismegistus, associated with the Sun and the light cycles. A name that evokes legends and mysteries.

- Hermes Trismegistus (Three Times Great) is a syncretic combination of the Greek god Hermes and the Egyptian god Thoth¹⁰, bringing astrology, alchemy and theurgy together; his name can be found in Muslim writings, predating Christianity, as well as within the *Prisca Sapientia*¹¹ lineage, as the embodiment of the universal wisdom transcending cultural and temporal boundaries.
- Either a contemporary of Moses, or the third in a line of men named Hermes (after Enoch and Noah and the Egyptian priest king), he was named as Hermes Trismegistus on the account for being “Thrice Great” as the greatest Priest, Philosopher and King¹² of all times.
- In some cases, also called “The Atlantean”, as legends credited the Egyptian god Thoth with being a survivor of Atlantis, and as such the bearer of collected ancient wisdom of that sunken land, eastward into Egypt.

First and foremost, the ancient sage, Hermes Trismegistus, is considered the founding father of Alchemy, as the purported author of the *Emerald Tablet*, the seminal work of Alchemy and centerpiece to Hermetica, the extensive body of work attributed to him, as Corpus Hermeticum (100 BCE)¹³.

⁹ Wikipedia.

¹⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hermes-Trismegistos-Egyptian-god>

¹¹ Skinner, S. et al. (2019) “*Splendor Solis: The world’s most famous Alchemical Manuscript*” (2019), p.74.

¹² Yates, F., “Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition”, Routledge, London, 1964, p.52

¹³ A widely diverse series of ancient and medieval texts that lay the basis of various philosophical systems known as Hermeticism. Oxford University Cabinet. <https://www.cabinet.ox.ac.uk/emerald-tablet-hermes-trismegistus>

The Emerald Tablet

The Emerald Tablet, or Tabula Smaragdina¹⁴ describes the creation of the universe, the soul of humanity and the way to spiritual rebirth. Central to the tablet is the concept of “as above, so below”, planes of correspondences and interdependencies between the above macrocosm (the living universe as a whole), and the below microcosm (the human being, miniature reflection of the universe) and the idea that everything exists as pairs of gendered polar opposites, the cornerstone in Alchemy underneath the “Sacred Marriage” idea (more details in next chapters).

Alchemy has been seen as a science that derives from the knowledge of God, Nature and Man. As “a perfect knowledge of either of them cannot be obtained without the knowledge of the other two, for these three are one and inseparable”. In its highest aspects it deals with the spiritual regeneration of man, “[...] so that a human being can [embrace and elevate his maximum potential and] become a god, by the power of God, in the same sense as a seed becomes a plant by the aid of the four elements, and the action of the invisible fifth.”¹⁵

There is a science that projects a great Light on those three words: God, Nature, and Man. This science is Kabbalah.¹⁶

¹⁴ The Emerald Tablet, in a translation by Isaac Newton found among his alchemical papers housed in King's College Library, Cambridge University, reads as follows:

*“Tis true without lying, certain and most true.
That which is below is like that which is above and that which is above is like that which is below
to do the miracle of one only thing
And as all things have been and arose from one by the mediation of one: so all things have their birth from this one
thing by adaptation.
The Sun is its father, the moon its mother,
the wind hath carried it in its belly, the earth is its nurse.
The father of all perfection in the whole world is here.
Its force or power is entire if it is converted into earth.
Separate thou the earth from the fire,
the subtle from the gross
sweetly with great industry.
It ascends from the earth to the heaven and again it descends to the earth
and receives the force of things superior and inferior.
By this means you shall have the glory of the whole world and thereby all obscurity shall fly from you.
Its force is above all force,
for it vanquishes every subtle thing and penetrates every solid thing.
So was the world created.
From this are and do come admirable adaptations where of the means is here in this.
Hence I am called Hermes Trismegist, having the three parts of the philosophy of the whole world.
That which I have said of the operation of the Sun is accomplished and ended.”*

—Isaac Newton. "Keynes MS. 28". *The Chymistry of Isaac Newton*. Ed. William R. Newman. June 2010. Retrieved March 4, 2023.

¹⁵ Franz Hartmann, “Pronaos of the Temple of Wisdom” (1890), p. 85.

¹⁶ Aïvanhov, Omraam Mikhaël (1990), *L’Alchimie Spirituelle*, Editions Prosveta (p.55)

History of Kabbalah

A received tradition made of letters and light

Kabbalah is a Jewish word meaning “received tradition”. It signifies fundamentally the reception and interpretation of the divine Law, transmitted by hereditary right and orderly succession of revelations, through the word, and without the (initial) mediation of written letters. This is clearly explained by Pico della Mirandola, the Italian philosopher (1463-94) who connected Hermetica with Kabbalah during the Renaissance. In fact, “the most secret mysteries were transmitted by the founders of our religion from mind to mind, without the mediation of letters, but simply by word of mouth. [...] When the true interpretation of the Law transmitted to Moses by divine Will [with the initial prescription not to spread it or write it down] was revealed (also in this case by God’s disposition) it was called Cabbala, which for the Jews has the same meaning as our “Reception”. This name is certainly due to the fact that those doctrines were transmitted [and received] from person to person almost by hereditary right, and not in written form, but by orderly succession of revelations”¹⁷.

Man has always been fascinated by the origins and creation of the world.

Mystics in a Garden leading to Paradise

The story of Kabbalah begins in the first century CE in a contemplative garden, with four Jewish mystics entering the “Pardes” (a word meaning “garden” in Persian, and root of “paradise”), in deep meditation so as to embark on mystical voyages of discovery and gain detailed insights on the origins and structure of the Cosmic Creation¹⁸.

The downloads of such prophetic visions and “received tradition” were later distilled in two books the *Sefer Yetzirah*, or Book of Formation, and *Zohar*, or Book of Light, and further developed into the Principles of Kabbalah, centuries later in Northern Spain and Provence,¹⁹ and

¹⁷ from “Discorso sulla Dignità dell’Uomo”, Pico Della Mirandola, pp. 81-83

¹⁸ A group of Jewish mystics whose curiosity about the nature of heaven inspired them to embark on mystical voyages of discovery. [...] Sunk deep into meditative trances, they reported elaborate travelogs of their visits to heaven, describing in detail the architecture and layout of the empyrean palaces. [...] The heavenly voyagers hewed pathways along which the initiate might travel to experience celestial bliss. [...] through meditations, incantations, and body contortions [...], experience the sublime [...] and attain mystical communion with God and his angels. [...] (Freedman, 2019, p. 16-17)

¹⁹ Written in Hebrew, the Book of Formation [...] created a mystical vocabulary for the first time [...], and a quasi-scientific, interconnected way of understanding how, [...] the cosmos was formed. It was all to do with language, and numbers. [...] The Book of Formation [...] developed and expanded by different schools of mystics, philosophers and [...] scientists over the succeeding centuries. By the time the threads were drawn together in the XII century Provence, the principles of Kabbalah were established. (Freedman, 2019, p. 17-18)

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contributed to the Enlightenment philosophy and, in general, as an instrument for personal and spiritual growth.

Sefirot and The Tree of Life

While focusing on the Work of Creation, as a way to codify how the universe was brought into light, the *Sefer Yetzirat* introduces the Sefirot, a concept central to Kabbalah.

The Sefirot, or Light emanations, are divine attributes evoking God's infinite light. These are "vessels" or channels of divine light and creative consciousness, through which the essence of *Ein Sof*, the Infinite unknowable divine, is revealed to mankind.

Geometrically represented and known as the "Tree of Life", symbol of man's body, the Sefirot express, and invite to embrace, the divine primordial light, projected out to create Man in the image of God.

Essence High-lights, Considerations and Differences

Both Kabbalah and Alchemy share, beyond many aspects in common, the notion of Light and the embodiment of Light, as the expression and integration of the Gold-divine potential within us, and serve that inner calling in our life to transform both our Soul and World.

While both Kabbalah and Alchemy incorporate the concept of Light, Kabbalah places emphasis on its divine and spiritual aspects; Alchemy focuses primarily on the transformative agent within matter. In Kabbalah, the concept of Light is closely associated with the divine and is considered a metaphor for divine energy, wisdom, and revelation. The divine light is seen as the source of creation and the means through which the divine manifests. Alchemy, on the other hand, focuses primarily on the transformation of matter. Alchemists viewed the role of light as essential in the transmutation process, both symbolically and practically. They used the term "light" metaphorically to refer to the spiritual essence or vital force within matter. They sought to purify and refine matter, discovering its hidden spiritual essence or light. The transmutation of base metals into gold was seen as a metaphor of this transformation, liberating and amplifying the hidden light within everything.

Light and the embodiment of Light

I believe Light is our essence, origin and destination: what we are made of, where we originate from, and where ultimately we return to. We are stardust, we are Light Beings. Our ultimate goal is to illuminate and elevate.

Importance of Light

The universal archetype of Light is central to all main religions²⁰ and wisdom traditions. Monotheism states that there is one only source of light; all gods are embodiments of that Light.²¹

*I am the Light of the World.*²²
*I am the way, the Truth and the Light.*²³
The Gospel of John
Holy Bible

*Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.
His light is like a niche in which there is a lamp, the lamp is in a crystal, the crystal is like a shining star, lit from 'the oil of' a blessed olive tree, 'located' neither to the east nor the west, whose oil would almost glow, even without being touched by fire.
Light upon light! Allah guides whomever He wills to His light.
And Allah sets forth parables for humanity. For Allah has 'perfect' knowledge of all things.*
The Parable of the Light of Allah
An-Nur, Quran²⁴

The Soul may be likened to a ray of sun; so the souls of angels, not being adorned with physical garb, are light, are flames themselves. The scriptures, therefore, say the angels are made of light. In short, all souls are made of that essence that is the essence of the whole manifestation.

Hazrat Inayat Khan
(*Sufi Mystic 1882-1927*)²⁵

²⁰ Cardinal Ravasi, G. (2015). Light, universal symbolic archetype: On the occasion of the Opening Ceremony for the International Year of Light, UNESCO 2015, Pontificia Academia of Theologia

²¹ The Kabbalah - Dialogue with Zvi Ish-Shalom”, Humanity Raising call 27/11/2020.

²² “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (Gospel of John (8:12), Holy Bible, New International Version, NIV 2011, Biblica).

²³ “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (Gospel of John (14:6), Holy Bible, New International Version, NIV 2011, Biblica)

²⁴ Quran, An-Nur XXIV-35 – The Parable of the Light of Allah, An-Nur, (Surah An-Nur XXIV-35).

²⁵ Inayat Khan, Z. (2023) Immortality: A Traveler’s Guide – Sufi Contemplations on the Road to the End of Time. Omega Publications. Suluk Press, Richmond, Virginia (Lecture 22, 1923), p. 43.

Everything is in-formed of and made of Light, according to indigenous traditions, mystics and ancient religions, and Physics – and this belief goes back in time. Indigenous wisdom keepers, as the Layqa²⁶ people, understand that everything in the universe is made of Light, and that Light forms and creates matter²⁷. Quantum physics confirms that at the very heart of matter, what we find at the most fundamental level, are vibration and light²⁸. Statements such “Light is the shadow of God” can be found equally in Muslim philosopher and mystic Ibn Arabi (1165-1240)²⁹ and also in a theoretical physicist such as Albert Einstein (1879-1955)³⁰. Eastern mystical and religious traditions (such as Advaita Vedanta and Buddhism) speak of a “pure consciousness”, often equated with bright Light, as the fundamental reality underlying all phenomena. The Essenes and Gnostic Gospels point the human spiritual path towards awakening that inner Light to embody and serve, as “Children of the Light”, the divine spark in everyone, leading to the further evolution of humanity. It is said that Atlanteans prayed to the Light and employed a Light language through space and time³¹.

Light's Origins and the Kabbalah

At the origin of the cosmos, the primordial Light is the protagonist, introducing Phōs the primordial man of light. As told in the Book of Genesis, on Day One God said “Let there be Light” and there was Light³². In Greek, “light” is phōs; which also means “man”. “For the

²⁶ The Layqa are the medicine men and women of Peru, who fled to the High Andes to preserve themselves, their traditions and healing techniques, upon persecution from the conquistadors of Spain. (Wikipedia - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Layqa>).

²⁷ Villoldo, A. (2005). *Soul Journeying*. Hay House (p. XIX).

²⁸ “All the physical matters are composed of Vibration” said Max Planck, father of Quantum Physics. If we think of Vibration as Sound and Light, “What's most interesting is that, if a frequency is vibrating fast enough, it's emitted as a Sound and if it is vibrating much faster, it is emitted as a color of Light. If we wanted to convert Sound to Light, we would simply raise its frequency by forty octaves. This results in a vibration in the trillions of cycles per second. So, if a pianist could press a key, way above the eighty-eight keys that exist on a piano, that key would produce Light. This could create a chord of Light in the same way they can create a chord of sound. And it would be seen as colors of Light because it would be moving at the speed of Light.” [Max Planck quotation; DK Matai (2013), *Colours of Sound and Light: Energy, Frequency and Vibration – Politics / Science*]

²⁹ Ibn Arabi (1995). *La sagesse des prophètes*. (Spiritualités vivantes, Editions Albin Michel, France). Pp.112-114.

³⁰ Albert Einstein, in conversation with Gustavo Adolfo Rol (Italian parapsychologist, 1903 –1994) “Discutendo con Gustavo Adolfo Rol, Albert Einstein una volta, alza la mano, la frappe tra la lampada e il tavolo e dice: «*Vedi? Quando la materia si manifesta, proietta un'ombra scura, perché è materia. Dio è puro spirito e dunque quando si materializza non può manifestarsi se non attraverso la luce. La luce non è altro se non l'ombra di Dio.*» in *Realtà Sannita* (2019).

³¹ Wilson, S. and Prentis, J. (2011). *Atlantis and the New Consciousness*. Ozark Mountain Publishing, US.

³² “Dixitque Deus : Fiat lux. Et facta est lux.” from the Latin Vulgate Bible, as a translation from the Hebrew “וַיֵּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, יְהִי אוֹר; וַיְהִי-אוֹר” (or vayo'mer 'Elohiym yehiy 'or vayehiy 'or). in Genesis 1:3 of the Torah, first part of the

Gnostics it was a commonplace to see a deliberate pun here. God created as the first of all creatures, a man of light”³³. Another man was to follow, the Human (Adam) on Day Six³⁴.

*“There is a light within a man of light, and he lights up the whole world.
If he does not shine, it is darkness.”*

The Gospel of Thomas

This Phōs Anthropos is the heavenly model through which the earthly Adam is forged by the Demiurge.³⁵ Whereas earthly Adam (whose name’s four letters encipher the four cardinal points)³⁶ is the archetype of the outer man in flesh subject to Nature’s elements, planetary influences, and Fate, Phōs instead is the archetype of the primordial man of light, the hidden spiritual man. Also known as Prometheus by the Greeks, Phōs is the Man of Light, oriented and orienting towards light because he follows his own inner guide of light.³⁷

Phōs – or Adam Kadmon (meaning the primordial Adam) represents the synthesis of the Sefirot, integrating within and radiating out all the light emanations through which God reveals Himself.

Hebrew Bible and The Old Testament the Greek και είπεν ο Θεός γενηθήτω φως και εγένετο φως” (or kai eipen ho Theos genēthētō phōs kai egeneto phōs). .

³³ Griffith Jones, R (2008), *Mary Magdalene: The Woman Whom Jesus Loved*, Canterbury Press, UK, p.103.

³⁴ And God said, “Let us make a Human, in our image and in a likeness” [...]. So God made the Human, in the image of God he made him, make and female he made them. (Genesis 1.26-27, Greek version)

³⁵ According to the Lurianic Kabbalah, the symbol of Primordial Man, the first being to emerge with the creation of the cosmos is common to a number of religious and philosophical traditions. The Upanishads describe a primal man composed of the very elements which were to become the world. According to the Upanishads this "gigantic divine being" is both infinitely far and deposited near the innermost recesses of the human heart. Indeed, in the Hindu tradition, the Primordial Man is identified both with the entire Universe and the soul or essence of all things. Interestingly, a similar image is found in Plutarch who relates that the entirety of the heavens is arranged in the form of a macro-anthropos, a colossal human being who is conceived as a model for the human world. For Plutarch, the sun is at the heart of this being and the moon, the sun 零 androgynous messenger, is located in between the heart and belly. [...] In the Kabbalah, the Primordial Man is spoken of as Adam Kadmon, and, in the Lurianic Kabbalah this symbol becomes a pivotal notion linking God, Man, and the World (Lurianic Kabbalah). As a result of the Breaking of the Vessels, the Primordial Adam was himself partly shattered into a multitude of individual souls, who themselves are comprised of the same fragments or Kellipot that form our world, and which are exiled and alienated in the "Other Side.". The task of individual men and women is to extract (via an act of “birur”) those sparks (“netzotzim”) that are his or her fortune to encounter in life, and to raise and spiritualize them, so as to reconstitute the Sefirot and the figure of the Primordial Man as five Partzufim (Visages or Personalities of God) and restore the harmony of the opposites, as well as the conjugal relations between the masculine and feminine aspects of God, man and the world. Each individual, as he or she travels along life's path, encounters those persons, events and things that contain sparks that he or she is uniquely suited to redeem. The "raising of the sparks" is the vehicle of Tikkun ha-Olam, the Restoration of the World. The ideal of a restored and redeemed world, which overcomes chaos and evil, gives meaning to that which is senseless, and concretizes the abstract values represented in the Sefirot, is the highest possible perfection, a perfection that assures the completion of Ein-sof the Infinite God (from Lurianic Kabbalah <http://www.newkabbalah.com/newkabbalah.html>)

³⁶ . α= ανατολή (rising of the sun, East); δ=δύσις (setting of the sun, West); ά=άρκτος (the polar Bear, North); μ = μεσημβρία (midday , South). In Corbin, H. (1971), *L’Homme de Lumière dans le Soufisme* (Italian version, p.20).

³⁷ Corbin H. (1971) p.20-21.

“[...]”
*There's a blaze light in every word,
it doesn't matter which you heard,
the holy or the broken hallelujah*
[...]"
Hallelujah³⁸
Leonard Cohen
(Canadian Singer and Poet, 1934-2016)

Light Embodiment

Light is the quintessence of Presence and Grace, in the way Spirit shows the way, and manifests itself within Man. Our body serves as a temple to embody and radiate that Light into the world. Western and Eastern mystical traditions often describe experiences of a white bright “blinding” light accompanying states of deep spiritual realization³⁹, or Enlightenment, as levels of higher consciousness are developed and embodied. Many wisdom traditions describe the process and stages of light consciousness traveling through the body and culminating at the top, attesting to Enlightenment. In this light movement through the body, both ascension and descension play an important role. Light moves through three areas, named as the base, the center, and the top of the body, as key functions for light embodiment, respectively serving for light grounding, integration, and realization.

Light centers in the body

Many cultures around the world believe our body systems have light energy centers, known as Chakras or wheels of Light. These wheels, often described as spinning vortices and antennae, are located along the spine where vital energy and information are received, released and exchanged with nature; each contributes to project a luminous field, whose glow and radiance indicate the state of personal health, awareness and illumination of a person, throughout life at any given time. While most Eastern Yoga traditions assume all chakras within the body, more ancient and indigenous wisdom cultures believed additional ones also exist, and reach far beyond our physicality, reflecting our Soul and Light Spirit⁴⁰.

³⁸ Cohen, L. (1984). Hallelujah, Album Various Positions (December 1984)

³⁹ Strassman, R. (2001), DMT – The Spirit Molecule (Italian version, p.99)

⁴⁰ Yoga Ayurvedic traditions recognize seven Chakras, all contained within our body (numbered from the base to the top of our head, 1. Root Chakra, 2. Sacral Chakra, 3. Solar Plexus Chakra, 4. Heart Chakra, 5. Throat Chakra, 6. Third-

Embodying light in Kabbalah

The Sefirot can also be placed along the body, from the top to the base, and displayed in correspondence to the Spiritual, Mental, Emotional and Physical qualities or intelligence centers. In diagram representations, when vertically grouped, the Sefirot highlight respectively masculine, neutral and feminine attributes (Severity, Mildness, Mercy); horizontally, they divide into four Worlds, or levels of existence⁴¹, as a result of combining horizontally attributes of each Sefira. These configurations match with both the four elements, as well as with Spirit, Mind, Soul, Body categories).

The Four Worlds of Healing through the Light

- a) World of Emanation - Aziluth, or Spiritual world of archetypes [Fire]
[1. Kether (Divine Will), 2. Chokmah (Wisdom), 3. Binah (Understanding)]
- b) World of Creation - Briah, or divine throne and Mental world [Air]
[4. Chesed (Kindness), 5. Gevurah (Discipline/ Strength), 6. Tifereth (Beauty/Harmony)]
- c) World of Formation - Yetzirath, or Emotional world of angels [Water]
[7. Netzach (Glory/ Eternity), 8. Hod (Splendour), 9. Yesod (Foundation)]
- d) World of Action - Assiah, or Physical world of matter, purpose of creation [Earth]
[10.⁴² Malkuth (Kingdom or Shekinah, divine presence in the physical reality)]

Each World can be interpreted as dimensional levels of intentionality related to the natural human desire to heal, “receive” and embody the divine Light. Following this perspective, the Kabbalah Sefirot are a journey of the primordial Light (using alchemical language, from above and within, to below and without), through the Spirit, to the Soul and Psyche and the Body with our Actions, out in the world. Reflecting and contemplating on the Tree of Life serves as a way to awakening and embodying Ein-Soph, the Infinite Light. As in Yoga, breathing into the chakras to activate them, absorbs and liberates Prana’s Light.

Eye chakra, 7. Crown Chakra), while other cultures believe there are additional ones, extending beyond our physicality (8. Soul chakra and 9. Spirit Chakra, for example for the Layqa people) - each chakra holding a different meaning and quality.

⁴¹ In Kabbalah the term “world” signifies a particular mode and instrument of divine activity into human existence.

⁴² Whereas here only ten Sefirot are listed, An eleventh Sefirah appears in some representations, Da'at (Knowledge), as the sum of “Wisdom” and “Understanding”, and the mystical state where all ten Sefirot in the Tree of Life are reflected and united as one in a perfect and infinite sharing of divine light. (see more on Wikipedia /Da’at)

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Both Chakras and Sefirot are numbered, indicating a vertical movement and progression of light through the body⁴³. While in Kabbalah, Light consciousness moves through each Sefira, with the highest called “Kether” or Crown, in the Ayurvedic tradition it moves through the Chakras (light centers), with the highest also called the Crown. In both traditions, the top of the head plays a significant role. The Crown, Kether sefira or the top chakra, is the center and top of the skull, anatomically corresponding to the human Pineal Gland⁴⁴. The pineal gland has been recognized in scientific experiments (for example the various works with psychedelics conducted by scientists such as Dr. Stanislav Grof, or Dr. Rick Strassman and others) as the site of integration in the brain of both hemispheres, incorporating both the rational and intuitive, masculine and the feminine qualities. According to Yoga, it is in the Pineal Gland that the Solar (Ida) and Lunar (Pingala) aspects of the Kundalini energy, arising from the base of the spine, unite at the top of the head; this union fully completes the integration initially activated in the heart chakra. Alchemy refers to union as the “Sacred Marriage” of opposites, leading to Samadhi, namely a heightened state of consciousness. These two currents are also present on the sides of the Sefirot’s Tree of Life.⁴⁵

This spiritual light, which we call "Nature," or the soul of the world, is a spiritual body, which, by means of Alchemy, can be made tangible and visible; but as it exists in an invisible state, therefore it is called "spirit."

Johannes Trithemius

[German Benedictine Abbot (1462-1516)]

Embodying light in Alchemy

In the same way, Alchemy is a journey of bringing forth and embodying the Gold-Light, through the four stages in the Great Work. In an expansion of consciousness these stages describe psychological transitions and can also be associated with the four elements:

- a) The (blackening) Nigredo or Separatio: as separating matter from spirit, body disconnected from soul (manifesting as psychological suffering and depression) [Earth]
- b) The (whitening) Albedo or Solution: awakening to potential, dissolving and purifying, opening and cleansing the heart for healing to begin, letting go of the Old. [Water]

⁴³ A correspondence can be mapped between Chakras and Sefirot.

⁴⁴ Its name stems from the Latin “pineus”, relating to the pine, pinus. This little organ is thus pine-formed, or shaped like a pine-cone.

⁴⁵ (Goddard, D. (1999). p.68-70)

- c) The (yellowing) Citrinitas or Aurora: as the Dawning of insight and initial illumination [Air]
- d) The (reddening) Rubedo or Coniunctio: as the final Rising of the Sun, reconnecting to Spirit, inspiring Body, Mind and Soul to integrate and embrace the primordial light [Fire].

Alchemy describes the awakening of consciousness, where the pathway of light traverses these four alchemical stages⁴⁶, integrating opposites and making all whole again.

*Hidden within man there exists a heavenly and divine light
which cannot be placed in man from without
but must emerge from within.”*
Zosimos of Panopolis
(Graeco-Egyptian alchemist and gnostic mystic, 300 CE)⁴⁷

Activating Light in the body

The technology of light embodiment can be correlated with aligning and calibrating the mind-body intelligence for heightened awareness, opening up to deep multidimensional experiences and acceleration of human consciousness and evolution.

It is argued that the effect of Light within the human consciousness, in particular when coupled with unconditional Love within the heart, leads to a full activation of the Light body, as a vehicle for awareness ascension, expanded consciousness integration in the body system, and empowerment to a life dedicated in loving service of the World⁴⁸. The individual expansion of consciousness leads to an acceleration in whole human evolution. Alchemy speaks about integrating that gold’s light.

⁴⁶ Brenda Crowther beautifully marks the passage of light when describing the four stages of Alchemy “The modern word for the nigredo is depression.[...] The state of The Dark Night of the Soul is part of the journey towards the light. Who can see the light of the stars if there is no dark night? The albedo is the first light after a period of psychological darkness, or deep incubation. Slowly the light begins to shine on new, undiscovered aspects of our psycho-spiritual being. This is often symbolised in dreams of washing [...]. New creative qualities, once hidden in the psyche, start to emerge. The rosy dawn is the first light of day. Dawn is not yet sunrise, but the initial nigredo has refreshed the new light in the psyche, bringing the albedo. This has thrown light on new possibilities. At this stage there is often the realisation of a new creative life, either on the inner or outer level. A new awareness comes into life. The sun is our daytime star, illuminating the world. It symbolises the mystical marriage within the soul and puts an end to the gentle light of the stars in the night sky. The true light has appeared, and is above personal insight. The sunrise is sometimes called ‘the reddening’ to let us know that Eros, love, has arrived in our souls and the world.”(notes from Ubiquity Wisdom School, Alchemy – The Soul’s Journey, Course by Brenda Crowther, MA. and Gyorgyi Szabo, Ph.D., January – February, 2022).

⁴⁷ Anne Baring, Fintry Trust Weekend, September 2016 – speaking about the Vision of Zosimus.

⁴⁸ Wilson, S. & Prentis, J. (2011).

Sacred Marriage: The Art of Integration

We have inside us the power to elevate our Self and to connect to a Light within us to co-create a new and beautiful world reality. We are capable of breathing into, and embodying, that spirit to manifest the divine light and integrate sky and earth into one⁴⁹.

Integration of Polarities

The ultimate objective of all religion and wisdom traditions is reaching the non-dualistic state, in communion with the greater consciousness of All That Is. A Sacred Marriage where all polarities are embraced in one higher view, where realization is achieved integrating opposites.

Integrating Light in Yoga

Fascinatingly, in this respect a similarity can be drawn between Yoga and Alchemy. The word Yoga in Sanskrit means yoke or “union”⁵⁰. Yoga and Alchemy share the same path: union with That which is both the source and the goal of All That Is. This attainment is represented in Alchemical symbolism by both the Ouroboros, the serpent eating its own tail, and continually being reborn from itself, representing the eternal cycle of change and renewal, and by Azoth⁵¹, the alchemical term for Mercury, the first principle and universal remedy, the Alpha and the Omega— that “essential agent of transformation hidden in all matters that makes transmutation possible”⁵²

As Yoga speaks of the solar and lunar currents (Pingala and Ida), uniting in the Crown chakra, so does Alchemy metaphorically speak of the Sacred Marriage or the Great Work leading to illumination. The Great Work of Alchemy as beautifully depicted with alchemical images and language in *Splendor Solis*, is about the conjunction of the Philosopher’s Sulphur and Mercury, exemplifying the chemical wedding between the Lunar Queen and the Solar King,

⁴⁹ From capturing personal insights and reflections after meditation (PMF AW Reflection 6/2/2022)

⁵⁰ The Sanskrit noun योग yoga is derived from two roots, as yujir yoga (to attach, join, harness, yoke), and yuj samādhaui (to concentrate). Yoga is a cognate of the English word "yoke".[...] The first use of the root of the word "yoga" is in Rigveda’s dedication to the rising Sun-god (Rigveda hymn 5.81.1). (Wikipedia/Yoga (etymology))

⁵¹ [Azoth] This artificial word is a verbal formula for the completion of work of Alchemy. It consists of the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet (A for Aleph and Th for Tav), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet (A for Alpha and 0 for Omega), and the first and last letters of the Latin alphabet (A and Z): “I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last”. (Goddard, D. (1999), p.4)

⁵² Wikipedia/Azoth (Basis).

respectively represented as Diana-Moon (the White Stone) and Apollo-Sun (the Red Stone)⁵³. “When positive and negative currents are brought together in an electrical circuit, a bulb may be lit. When the solar and lunar subtle energies are brought into a state of balanced union the human being can become illumined”.⁵⁴The union and completion of the Great Work symbolized by the Alchemical Gold, has the purpose of reconnecting with, embodying and serving Light Spirit, oftentimes referred to as the Quintessence, Anima Mundi or Prima Materia, as the innate divine substance we are born with.

*It is a unity, and nevertheless a trinity, according to its aspects as Sulphur, Mercury, and Salt.
These three are distinct qualities characterizing the spirit of Light,
and nevertheless, they are nothing different from the essence of the Light,
and this Light is eternal nature, or the soul of the world.*

*Franz Hartmann
(Medical doctor and Alchemist, 1838-1912)⁵⁵*

In the kabbalistic tradition, this unity is represented by the meeting or union of the two pillars (masculine and feminine) on the right and left sides of the Tree of Life in the central pillar, whose focus is Tifereth, the heart⁵⁶. The sixth Sefirot Tifereth (often translated as Heart, Beauty, Compassion and Miracle) is the divine light emanation that integrates and balances the Sefira of Chesed (Kindness) and Gevurah (Strength).

To me the Sacred Marriage speaks of the art of bridging the visible with the invisible; finding the sacred within us, and re-connecting with it; embracing and integrating opposites, and by this means allowing peace, realizing the divine within us. In that (horizontal) embrace, a (vertical) alignment and an elevation of the spirit takes place, an upward calling, which is capable of uniting earth and sky so as to embody our true human-ness, “as above, so below”. By embracing the primordial light we connect with something ancient and eternal.

There’s something powerful when we integrate and transcend, and are able to find the way beyond opposites, as we go beyond the dualism and are reconnected with one-ness.

⁵³ As depicted in Plate 4 in the “Splendor Solis” Book, the sacred marriage exemplifies the alchemical formula “solve et coagula”, [meaning dissolve and coagulate, as release and solidify energy], considering the Queen “virgin’s milk” to be a solvent. [Skinner, S. et al. (2019) Splendor Solis: The world’s most famous Alchemical Manuscript”].

⁵⁴ (Goddard, D. (1999), p.69)

⁵⁵ Hartman, F. (1890) Pranoos of the Temple of Wisdom (Kessinger Publishing, Kila, Montana), p. 89.

⁵⁶ Baring, A. (2023).

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And it is what we are called to be and do in this life: to reunite and embody. Our body exists for that purpose and allows us to experience and ultimately reintegrate spirit within us and in life reality, variety and oppositions.

Integrating as Head-Heart-Hand coherence

Most of today's challenges are highly complex and require the ability to expand our capacity to hold paradoxes, and integrate all our different intelligences. I believe the art in life is about integrating apparent opposite dimensions, ultimately integrating the mind, the heart and the body. That is, to integrate what we think, sense and feel, what we say, choose and act, to create coherence and become whole, healing the internal separation within us and the external fragmentations in our world. Anytime our head, heart and hands are disconnected, there is inconsistency and incoherence, revealing a lack of integration. We dis-integrate and fall back into a dualistic polarized view. It is that Head-Heart-Hand coherence that determines our leadership presence and impacts our social field and our world⁵⁷. I believe leadership's purpose is to be the glue that holds and aligns the 'all' together; for leaders to serve integration rather than separation at all individual, organizational and systemic levels. It is in that integration that we are capable of transforming, shaping our inner and outer realities, turning us into gold.

Transformation: being Light and transmuting into Gold

Alchemy speaks of transformation, of a light presence that transmutes into gold, and demands a shift in leadership consciousness, healing our self, humanity and the world. Jung interpreted Alchemy as an ancient method of transformation – transformation of the soul – as the very foundation of Analytical Psychology. Alchemical work as such is the process of self-individuation and self-realization towards an integrated personality, a metamorphosis of the world psyche. treading the path of human transformation, in full awareness of our presence.

⁵⁷ According to an HeartMath Institute our thoughts and emotions affect the heart's magnetic field, which energetically affects our environment, whether or not we are conscious of it. (in HeartMath Institute (2009), Research on Magnetic field of the heart: each individual impacts the Field Environment. HeartMath Institute article, HeartMath Institute website. <https://www.heartmath.org/articles-of-the-heart/global-interconnectedness/each-individual-impacts-the-field-environment/>)

Transformation and Presence

Transformation and presence are intimately connected, and both identify and determine our human capacity to evolve and shape our reality and create a better world.

Trans-formation

Transformation comes from the Latin word “trans-forma”, which literally means changing beyond the form, beyond the pre-existing formal structure, inside-out. A change from the inside-out, a shift internal to the system, at the deepest level of our being (thinking, perceiving, looking at the world), so great that it irreversibly impacts our outside, and external reality. In Transformation Theory and quantum mechanics, transformation represents a leap in frequency and vibrations, with a passage from one energy state to another, capable of generating a new combination of waves and particles⁵⁸. Form changes as a consequence of something shifting at the fundamental levels of being and awareness in a living organism or system, leading to a new configuration as the effect of new perceptions, choices, actions the system makes. Symbolic of this is the image of the cocoon growing out, and trans-forming into a butterfly. Transformation is not a linear change: but a shift in form, in appearance, ultimately in presence.

Pres-(Ess)ence

Presence stems from the Latin “praesentia”. The original meaning of being present in a place, or the space before or around someone or something; over time evolving into appearance, as “carriage, demeanor, aspect”, and further on to suggest gravitas, impact, and awareness as a certain presence of mind (with “all faculties ready at command”), or presence of spirit, from the French “présence d’esprit”, and Latin praesentia animi⁵⁹.

Playing with the word Presence, I like decomposing it into Pres-(Ess)ence. In these terms Presence carries a multifold meaning, as both a leadership capacity and a constant invitation to be:

1. present to the essence of the moment - tuning into the potential that wants to emerge, the light present in every moment, opening to the gift between past and future;

⁵⁸ This transformation idea refers to the changes a quantum state undergoes in the course of time, whereby its vector moves between positions or orientations. Dirac, P. A. M. (1930). *The Principles of Quantum Mechanics*, Cambridge University Press

⁵⁹ Online Etymology Dictionary (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/presence>)

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2. present to our own essence, our light gift - as both who we really are in essence, and that light's presence, that is 'present' within and around us, and the 'present' we are born with; and lastly,
3. present to essence (as a verb) - as distilling and carrying forth the light present in every moment, and the unique light each and every one "gifts" to the world.

The inner quality of any transformation ultimately depends on that presence.

Human Transformation

Transformation is about shifting frequency, ultimately elevating human consciousness. Extending the Renaissance philosophy, we could conclude that the very nature of man, standing between the earth and the sky, is to integrate, transform and elevate consciousness. Pico della Mirandola, in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, sees humanity as the apex of all creation, responsible for its own spiritual elevation or decline: "neither celestial nor only earthly, man is a co-creator, a sculptor and forger of himself". I believe this speaks to our transformation into co-creators, to our human presence in between spiritual and material worlds, and to our capacity to develop our potential and expand our sensibility, as our ability to use all senses (sense-ability). Furthermore, flipping and stretching the Cartesian credo of the Enlightenment "Cogito, Ergo Sum" (I think, hence I am), we could now move forward with saying "I Am, hence I Transform" (or in Latin, "Sum, Ergo Trans-formo"). Breaking this down, and further elaborating: as I am here (fully present in the present, on this planet), I serve (I contribute) and transform (the world) - I serve growing and transforming into the light, and the transformation of consciousness. ("Sum, Ergo Illumino"). I believe presence is a gift that each of us has – a light that we have as a gift for ourselves and the people around us. It is only when we are present that we feel, only when we feel we can choose, only when we choose we can act. It is only when we are present (to the essence of who we are and what wants to emerge through us), we can have an impact, be a presence that transforms, that serves a transformation. As we reconnect with our essence, and dare to share it, this light expands, and contributes somehow to illuminate and elevate the world around us.

I believe we are invited to breathe into our Pres-(Ess)ence to expand and serve a purpose larger than our self: being the Light that illuminates and elevates consciousness in the World. I trust we will embrace that invitation and join a journey from head to heart and hands, to see, sense, and embody new ways that illuminate and elevate humanity on a path to Wisdom.

Soul Leadership

Alchemy is about serving a transformation deep inside-out, transmuting the lead of our present consciousness into gold, and projecting a new light out into the world. Developing our human Transformational Presence⁶⁰ capacity is crucial to elevating leadership consciousness in Leadership and Society at large.

Leadership: integrating Strategy, Wisdom and Action

There is a new frontier of leadership, that is more a way of being than just a way of doing; and connects with the notion of Presence and Integration, the sacred union in Alchemy. Leadership is intimate and intrinsic – as the outcome of any intervention, any transformation and action ultimately depends on the inner quality and alignment of the leader.

More and more we are being called to tap into our heart, as the bridge and place of integration between the head and hands, to find guidance and leadership, and embody a larger collective wisdom to the place where new Opportunity, Choice and Impact reside for us.

I believe a new leadership paradigm is emerging that reflects the need to integrate strategy, wisdom and action; and more and more use Silence as a doorway to tap into a larger field of Wisdom to sense, choose and embody new possibilities and shape a new reality. It is about listening and sensing into that potential and choosing who we are and want to become together in this world, and then respond consistently with fierce action. And that requires us, and every leader, to be very aligned and focused - pragmatic and anchored in the doing (horizontal axis) while deeply attentive and rooted in the being (vertical axis of presence).

It is about Leaders being in service to that Light, that spirit; sometimes an insight, or a bold vision that inspires; sometimes a Wisdom whisper sourced out of silence - that greater potential that's waiting to unfold, that's wanting to emerge, and is inviting us to co-create with it, that's asking for help to be birthed and embodied, taken into form and action, and manifested in this reality. As such it can be a major foundation for a new conscious leadership.

There is a space where our leadership presence makes the difference; when ideas, choices, and actions are aligned and coherent, fully integrated and embodied. We can define that

⁶⁰ The term has been coined by Alan Seale, author and founder of the Center for Transformational Presence, I am grateful to be part of and serve as global leader.

space as Soul Leadership, as that which invokes essence in pres-ence, speaks to Soul, and requires integrating Head, Heart, and Hands.

Soul Leadership: connecting and serving the light

Soul Leadership is a new paradigm emerging on the edge of this new leadership frontier. This has two components, *Leadership* and *Soul*, that invite into a shift in perspectives.

Firstly, it is about moving beyond the leading-following paradox in leadership: who leads versus who follows. Leadership is often associated with the idea of a leader and a group of followers and one's ability to influence the followers. However, in order to lead successfully, a leader is surely the first one who is required to know what to follow and trust into, particularly when navigating uncertain and complex situations. What if Leadership is ultimately about following? If we hold that possibility, what is in essence that thing that a leader follows? What is the source of that clarity that sheds light and acts as an inner compass?

Secondly, it is about acknowledging there is a Soul in everyone and everything. The word Soul refers to the unique breath, vital force, or essence that anima-tes, brings life to, and identifies every person and every-body "which lives, feels, thinks, and wills"⁶¹. We all recognise the existence of that unique essence, as the most fundamental level of being, and the DNA operating in every person, organization and system. We could argue that that unique essence has a mission (maybe to grow, learn, serve), or potential to unfold throughout lifetimes, and comes in this time and space reality with a big vision to project, and a sparkle of light to manifest through lifework and leadership.

In the end, that is the thing a leader ultimately has to learn: following and trusting that essence, that higher mission and vision and light and letting it ultimately lead you, as a leader.

Alchemy relates to that Soul Leadership journey. As we progress through life accompanying our soul, we discover it is all about learning to let this inner Light illuminate our path of transformation, embracing and elevating Wisdom as our guide to become the light we want to see shine in the world.

Soul Leadership is ultimately how we choose to hold life, to follow and respond from the essence, that inner quality and alignment in everyone and everything, to serve what wants to

⁶¹ Online Etymology Dictionary.

emerge through us, and manifest something greater than our self. It is a journey and a new way of living and leading from Soul, connecting with the Light, and serving the World.

"If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you.

If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you."

The Gospel of Thomas

(Logion 70)

Choosing light: a responsibility and choice to pour love into the system

Embracing this view requires courage; it is both a responsibility and a choice: a choice for Love versus Fear, choosing Light, especially in the darkest of times, to illuminate and elevate Wisdom for a consciousness shift in the world.

Courage to me means walking with our heart through fear – holding and staying true to what we know and sense is right deep in our heart, that light spark that flickers inside, and while looking fear in the eye moving ahead, honoring and embodying our naked truth. Courage alters how we see and face challenges. It shifts responsibility inside, within ourselves, rather than outside, to someone else.

Response-ability, as our ability to respond consciously, rather than simply react implies that we are responsible co-creators and sentient beings. We are responsible as we sense and participate with the world. That shifts focus from passively and statically looking, to actively and dynamically sensing any situation, from what's happening to us, to what wants to happen through us in every instance. We are responsible for co-creating the new reality that's unfolding, by contributing to bring about changes that are needed: being and bringing forth the light we want to see shine in the world.

And it is a choice how we choose to respond, what we choose to pour into the system. We are responsible for choosing what we focus on, in any time and situation, and how we choose to courageously respond in bringing forth the light we sense in our hearts. Ultimately, it is a choice between Love and Fear: whether we make space for light-love or darkness-fear.

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I believe ultimately the role of leaders is to reduce fear and and heal the world⁶²; consciously and courageously choosing to focus on and expand the light even in the darkest of times, particularly in these times of war in the world.

Healing our Self and the World

Healing is about directing light and attention towards what wants to be healed in us, in any situation and system. More and more in this fragmented world, we are invited consciously to integrate apparent opposites and heal our Self, Organizations and Systems. Healing, as the word suggests, is about making whole again. So, we are here to heal the fragmented parts and make it whole again, focusing on and serving light. That is directing focus and awareness, towards both individual and collective wounds and traumas that need to be seen, for light to shed upon, to soothe and heal. Focusing on Light means focusing on Love, as two sides of the same coin. Love as what we sense in the heart, when there is Light. Light as the source and effect of Love.

It feels to me that the light of healing descends when focusing on Love - what we love, as that which ultimately brings a spark of joy deep within through the heart to the Soul, (rather than the opposite) and choosing to channel and radiate that universal love. Realizing the great work of Alchemy is also about peace, making space for peace within and without ourselves in the world;

War and Peace: expanding the Light in the darkest times

Fundamentally, Peace is first and foremost a choice between Love and Fear– and what we choose to pour into the system, transmuting fear into love, dark into light. A choice we can always choose to make. Consciously moving from reacting from fear to responding from love. That move suggests that peace is an inner journey from head-to heart-to hand. Shifting what we believe and think is possible in our mind, to expanding our unique human capacity to feel and sense and hold paradoxes / polarities and know what it is true, to how we act and walk together

⁶²Morley-Fletcher, Paolo (2017). Transforming Leadership: How to reduce fear, create from uncertainty & make a difference in the world. LinkedIn article. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/transforming-leadership-how-reduce-fear-create-from-paolo/>

in the world and embody that integration to heal and make whole again. It is an inner journey, starting within and starting with our Self.

Wisdom Dialogue: A New Dialogue for Humanity in Peace

Making peace, integrating opposites, realizing the sacred marriage of Alchemy is a journey that begins with silence making space for Wisdom. Silence as a precondition for the mind to rest, suspend judgements and access Wisdom. Silence allows one to open up and engage in a dialogue with life and Wisdom, paving the way for a new dialogue with our Self and Humanity to develop. Peace starts with making space for silence and engaging in a new dialogue for humanity; I call it “Wisdom Dialogue”. It is a space informed by silence and sourced out of Wisdom that allows us to rekindle our sacred humanness and embody our interconnectedness and act as one, one human species, one Land and Ecosystem (rather than many divided nations), one Soul spirituality (rather many fighting religions) and be One with all that is.

Choosing Light: being and embodying the light you want to see shine in the world

Light is everything and everything is light. There’s no thing that does not contain light, if we see matter as condensed light, as physics has discovered. Everything reflects light, our inner light is a reflection of a larger consciousness. We can see the light; we can embody that Light.

Seeing the Light: A closing poem and invitation

What if the light we see comes from within us? What if the deep blue sky we see flows from within us? What if what we see, sees us and reflects on to us our light, speaking to us and projecting the beauty it sees in and through us? What if we are in constant dialogue with everything around us, everything that lives, as Spirit’s consciousness? If, for a moment, we assume all the above is possible, the light around us, in others, in every “thing,” depends on us, on our inner disposition, our brightness, our ability to radiate, emanate light. And if we look at where that emanation, that radiation originates from, our attention naturally goes inside our chest, right to our heart. We can feel this locus, we can maybe even sense a slight tender contraction in the heart muscle, at each heartbeat. It is the dialogue between Heart and Spirit that makes the Light. Light lives in our heart. Our heart is Light! If the light we see is the light we radiate, maybe the light around the Earth is the Light we all together radiate from our hearts. Or the inner Light we are intimately connected with, deep at the centre of this Earth, at the Heart of

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the Earth. So, breathe in, breathe inside your heart today, and be your light, be that Earth Light. Be the Heart Light! ⁶³

We can all choose to be that Light we want to see shine in the world.

*When day comes
we ask ourselves,
where can we find light in this never-ending shade?"
[...]
when the day comes
we step out of the shade aflame and unafraid,
the new dawn blooms as we free it,
for there is always light
if only we're brave enough to see it,
if only we're brave enough to be it.
Amanda Gorman
(The Hill We Climb, 2020)*

Ultimately Light and Wisdom are intimately connected. Seeing the Light is opening to Wisdom. For me in essence Wisdom is our inner ability to see within, through and beyond what's merely visible, and to bridge with what is less visible, the potential Light in everything, waiting to emerge.

Wisdom is about seeing and expanding the Light.

The path of Alchemy and Light is ultimately about human transformation and illuminating and elevating Wisdom in the world.

⁶³ From capturing personal insights and reflections after meditation (PMF AW Reflection 27/9/2022)

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